

CSV Links

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Normalisation, integration and deinstitutionalisation. These terms are being seen more and more often in CSV Links and in reference to human services. They are an integral part of the philosophy of community services, in that everyone has a right to live up to their potential.

This issue of CSV Links addresses some of the issues concerning normalisation, integration and deinstitutionalisation, particularly of the Department's clients.

A feature on the Central Highlands Region reminds us that CSV is working amongst com-

munities, with and on behalf of those communities, to provide the best possible standard of community services.

September was budget month. We bring you a story on the budget and how it affects programs provided by community services. ■

NORMALISATION What does it really mean?

International Year of Peace 1986



Although a great many people use the term "normalisation", they often do so in an imprecise and ill-advised way. In fact, a great many people, whether parents, friends, well-wishers or persons in the various professions, use the term without really having, or proposing any definition for it. The principle of normalisation originated in Scandinavia. Its exact origin as a term is not known, although N.E. Bank Mikkelsen, Director of the Danish Board of Social Welfare, was a key figure in incorporating the principle into Danish Law in 1959. At that time he defined the objective of appropriate treatment services in Denmark as "letting the mentally retarded obtain an existence as close to the normal as possible". This phrase was the basis of a theory later to be called "normalisation" which was and still is, a challenge to many of us in countries where a new attitude towards the treatment of handicapped people has emerged. In 1967, as a result of an international symposium on the legal aspects of normalisation, Bengt Nirje (pronounced Near-ye), then Secretary General of the Swedish Association for Retarded Children, interpreted "normalisation" as "making available to the mentally subnormal, patterns and conditions of every day life which are as close as possible to the norms and patterns of the mainstream of society".

He listed as "rights" some of the experiences that intellectually disabled

people in institutions were being denied, for example, the right to dress and feed themselves, the right to privacy and the right to go to school or go to work:

Many semantic problems about the word "normalisation" have arisen as a result of these early definitions. Some people have misinterpreted the word to mean an attempt at converting intellectually disabled people into so-called "normals". Normalisation, however, does not mean normality. An intellectually disabled person is not "normal" but then, who is? What is normality and does anyone in fact, want to be "normal" at a time when there is so much understanding for many people in society who are trying hard not to be uniform? In this regard, Bengt Nirje spoke of normalisation in very personal terms and said that it referred to the "normal" rhythm and routines of the human life cycle.

"Normalisation means . . . a normal rhythm of the day.

You get out of bed in the morning, even if you are profoundly intellectually and physically handicapped;

You get dressed, and leave the house for school or work,

in the morning you anticipate events, in the evening you think back on what you have accomplished;

the day is not a monotonous 24 hours with every minute endless.

You eat at normal times of the day and in a normal fashion;

not just with a spoon, unless you are an

infant;

not in bed, but at a table;

not early in the afternoon for the convenience of the staff.

Normalisation means . . . a normal rhythm of the week.

You live in one place, go to work in another, and participate in leisure activities in yet another.

You anticipate leisure activities on weekends, and look forward to getting back to school or work on Monday.

Normalisation means . . . a normal rhythm of the year.

A vacation to break the routines of the year.

Seasonal changes bring with them a variety of types of food, work, cultural events, sports, leisure activities.

Just think . . . we thrive on these seasonal changes.

Normalisation means . . . normal developmental experiences of the life cycle.

In childhood, children, but not adults, go to summer camps.

In adolescence one is interested in grooming, hairstyles, music, boyfriends and girlfriends.

In adulthood, life is filled with work and responsibilities.

In old age, one has memories to look back on, and can enjoy the wisdom of experience.

Normalisation means . . . having a range of choices, wishes, and desires respected and considered.

Adults have the freedom to decide where they would like to live, what kind

by Chris Glennen and David Griffiths

Cooperatives & Deinstitutionalisation

The Office of Intellectual Disability Services, with the Department of Labour has been examining independent living, employment and training options for people living in institutions, or who are to be resettled in the community. The development of specific employment and training (re) integration policies and services is critical to the success of deinstitutionalisation.

Service redevelopment involves four concepts and commitments;

- a. Reducing the number of institutions and minimising the number of residents and admissions to these institutions.
- b. Developing an increased range of community-based services.
- c. Redeveloping the structures, policies and practices of continuing institutions.
- d. Egalitarianism — the right to participate in the mainstream community.

Critical to the employment integration of people with intellectual disabilities is their employment in the market economy. Yet, existing traditional business enterprises are necessarily committed to improved productivity and profitability, working smarter as well as harder and recruiting and retaining the most 'productive' and 'employable' workers. In an environment of high continuing levels of unemployment and business closure, the demand for social purpose seems inappropriate.

The possibility of developing new types of business enterprise which reconcile social and economic values and objectives has been addressed by the Victorian Government's Ministerial Advisory Committee on Cooperation (MACC).

In February 1984 MACC was established to review the Cooperation Act 1981, mechanisms for the development of cooperation and the relationship between the cooperative and labor movements.

A cooperative is a group of people who voluntarily come together on a basis of equality, mutuality and democracy with the purpose of jointly promoting their socio-economic well-being based on democratic principles and practices e.g., worker, housing, child care, food and alternative lifestyle cooperatives.

The MACC report, *The Cooperative Way: Victoria's Third Sector*, has now been released and it offers a community-based alternative for some members of deinstitutionalised marginal groups through the ownership and control of their own cooperatives. The report argues



that cooperatives are an appropriate community-based alternative because they empower individuals and groups.

This empowerment is based on the democratic nature and social objectives of cooperatives. Cooperation is not just a nice assumption that individuals and groups should cooperate. Cooperation is an ideology which was originally developed in the 19th Century. The ideology is anti-competition and profit-making and proposes, instead, that people cooperate together in meeting their mutual needs as consumers, producers and workers. Cooperatives are generally seen as the democratic form of organisation.

The MACC report has suggested that there is potential for the development of cooperatives for those who have physical and/or intellectual disabilities. The report cites the experience of the Inner Urban Cooperative — Victoria's first cooperative to employ a majority of intellectually disadvantaged workers. A clothing manufacturing business, the cooperative was established in 1983 and employs an integrated workforce of 11 workers. Workers hold their own meetings and one worker attends the management committee meetings. There are two worker advocates to provide support and training for the workers who have intellectual disabilities. All workers are paid award wages. The cooperative is committed to an integrated rather than segregated workforce.

The cooperative is attempting the difficult task of simultaneously developing personal and work skills, a socially committed workplace and economic viability. Quite obviously, the experience of one cooperative should not be too readily generalised. The initial success of the cooperative, however, suggests a potential that should not be dismissed.

Cooperatives are relevant to people with intellectual disabilities. As egalitarian enterprises they are consistent with the egalitarian philosophy of the disability rights movement.

Cooperatives, then, are part of a range of vocational options that could be developed for some people who have intellectual disabilities. Cooperatives are a small sector of the Victorian economy.

The MACC report is confident that the potential for the growth of cooperation in the economy could be realised with an appropriate cooperative development philosophy, principles and strategies. We share this optimism and the experience of Italy and Mondragon, Spain, demonstrates that cooperatives can become part of the economic mainstream. Italy has over 136,000 cooperatives — representing approximately 10 per cent of the economy.

This overseas experience is demonstrating that cooperatives do provide the opportunity for marginalised groups to achieve independent living and their employment potential in the workforce.

In Italy a study of workers with disabilities has concluded that cooperatives are aware of the needs of the workers because they are equally concerned with social and economic productivity. Because of this responsiveness cooperatives are exempt from Italian law which requires public and private sectors to employ a minimum of 15 per cent of workers with disabilities if their workforce is above 35.

Cooperatives are a mainstream alternative. It has been estimated that 26 per cent of the Australian population are members of cooperatives. Cooperatives are legally required to observe award wages and conditions. They are a real alternative, then, to sheltered workshops.

Of course, the development of cooperatives is neither a simple nor exclusive solution to the (re) integration of people with intellectual disabilities. Cooperatives offer a viable alternative for some. It requires considerable expertise to establish, develop and maintain economically viable enterprises. It requires an unusual commitment to social objectives and workplace democratisation.

If cooperatives are to become an ingredient of the Government's service redevelopment policies and priorities, then, this will be critically influenced by how the disability movement responds to MACC — how the opportunity is reflected and reinforced in outcomes.

Chris Glennen is the Adult Vocational Services Consultant with the Office of Intellectual Disability Services and David Griffiths is a member of the Ministerial Advisory Committee on Co-operation.

Copies of the MACC Report are available from the Registry of Cooperatives, Myer House, 250 Elizabeth Street, Melbourne. Submissions on the Report should be made by 10 November 1986. ■